

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for selection of a reference die image comprising:

5 a die image comparator operable to create a difference image based upon a first die image and a second die image; and

10 a difference image analysis system coupled to the die image comparator, the difference image analysis system operable to analyze the difference image and to determine whether the first die image and the second die image may each be used as the reference die image.

15 2. The system of claim 1 further comprising a die imaging system coupled to the die image comparator, the die imaging system operable to create a digital representation of a die.

20 3. The system of claim 1 further comprising a die image storage system coupled to the die image comparator, the die image storage system operable to store data representative of the first die image and the second die image.

25 4. The system of claim 1 wherein the difference image analysis system further comprises a slope detector, the slope detector operable to determine whether the slope of a histogram changes from negative to positive.

7. A system for inspecting dies comprising:
a camera configured to obtain an image of one or more
dies; and

a reference die detection system coupled to the camera,
5 the reference die detection system operable to determine
whether a first die image and a second die image may be used
as reference images.

8. The system of claim 7 wherein the reference die
10 detection system further comprises an image comparator
operable to produce a difference image from the first die
image and the second die image.

9. The system of claim 8 wherein the reference die
15 detection system further comprises a difference analyzer
coupled to the image comparator, the difference analyzer
operable to determine whether the difference image contains
unacceptable features.

20 10. The system of claim 9 wherein the difference
analyzer further comprises a data sorter that is operable to
receive brightness data associated with a plurality of
pixels of the difference image and to create a histogram
from the brightness data.

25 11. The system of claim 10 wherein the difference
analyzer further comprises a slope detector coupled to the
data sorter, the slope detector operable to determine
whether a slope of the brightness data histogram changes
30 from negative to positive as a brightness magnitude
increases.

12. The system of claim 10 wherein the difference analyzer further comprises a dimension analyzer that is operable to determine (a) one or more dimensions for a group of pixels, where each pixel has a brightness magnitude that exceeds a predetermined allowable magnitude, and (b) whether one or more dimensions of the group of pixels exceeds one or more predetermined allowable dimensions.

13. The system of claim 10 wherein the difference analyzer further comprises a density analyzer that is operable to determine (a) one or more dimensions of two or more groups of pixels, where each group of pixels has a brightness magnitude that exceeds a predetermined allowable magnitude, and (b) whether a density of the two or more groups of pixels per unit area exceeds a predetermined allowable density.

14. The system of claim 9 wherein the difference analyzer further comprises a data sorter that is operable to receive image data associated with a plurality of pixels of the difference image and to create a histogram from the image data.

15. The system of claim 14 wherein the difference analyzer further comprises a slope detector coupled to the data sorter, the slope detector operable to determine whether a slope of the image data histogram changes from negative to positive as an image data magnitude increases.

16. The system of claim 14 wherein the difference analyzer further comprises a dimension analyzer that is operable to determine (a) one or more dimensions of a group

of pixels, where each group of pixels has an image data
magnitude that exceeds a predetermined allowable magnitude,
and (b) whether the dimensions of the group of pixels per
unit area exceeds one or more predetermined allowable
5 dimensions.

17. The system of claim 14 wherein the difference
analyzer further comprises a density analyzer that is
operable to determine (a) one or more dimensions of two or
10 more groups of pixels, where each group of pixels has an
image data magnitude that exceeds a predetermined allowable
magnitude, and (b) whether a density of the two or more
groups of pixels per unit area exceeds a predetermined
allowable density.

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18. A method for selecting a reference die image comprising:

subtracting a first die image from a second die image to create a difference image; and

5 determining whether the difference image contains unacceptable data.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein subtracting the first die image from the second die image comprises
10 subtracting brightness data for each pixel of the first die image from brightness data for a corresponding pixel of the second die image.

20. The method of claim 18 wherein subtracting the first die image from the second die image comprises
15 subtracting other image data for each pixel of the first die image from other image data for a corresponding pixel of the second die image.

21. The method of claim 18 wherein determining whether the difference image contains unacceptable data comprises:
forming a histogram from difference image data; and
determining whether a slope of the histogram changes
from negative to positive.

22. The method of claim 18 wherein determining whether the difference image contains unacceptable data comprises
determining whether a size of an area having a brightness deviation exceeds a predetermined allowable size.

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23. The method of claim 18 wherein determining whether the difference image contains unacceptable data comprises determining whether a size of an area having an other image data deviation exceeds a predetermined allowable size.

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24. The method of claim 18 wherein determining whether the difference image contains unacceptable data comprises determining whether a number of areas having brightness deviations exceeds a predetermined allowable number of areas having brightness deviations per unit area.

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25. The method of claim 18 wherein determining whether the difference image contains unacceptable data comprises determining whether a number of areas having other image data deviations exceeds a predetermined allowable number of areas having other image data deviations per unit area.

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26. The method of claim 18 further comprising:
selecting two or more difference images, where each difference image is selected from a different predetermined region of the silicon wafer; and

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combining the two or more difference images to form a reference image for use in comparing with each die of the silicon wafer.

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